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HOW JAPAN MEETS ITS FOOD PROBLEM

BY HIS EXCELLENCY, VISCOUNT KIKUJIRO ISHII,

Ambassador of Japan on Special Mission.

I am embarrassed by the honor you have done me in thus inviting me into a discussion interesting and of great value to all the world, but in which my part must be little more than a digression. Nevertheless, it would be unbecoming in me should I fail to avail myself of your courtesy and make an effort to inject some remarks which may perhaps throw light upon a situation and a condition foreign to the surroundings in which I find myself. As a representative of my Emperor and my countrymen, I came to tell the government and the people of the United States in all sincerity and earnestness that in this great and fearsome struggle in which we are all engaged, the East and the West must meet and labor together for the benefit of humanity, and that Japan is prepared to save and sacrifice more in order that as a nation she may live. We in Japan have not been idle during the heat of the day so far. In our own small way we have endeavored to do and we believe have done our best as we saw what we had to do. But we do not underestimate the further task before us and we realize that the future may demand further self-sacrifice and conservation of our resources—all for the common good in coöperation with our allies.

We have had special opportunity for the last month to see something of the vast machinery and resources at the command of the United States and to realize how much from its surplus there is to spare and how much can be conserved as the time of stress continues. America has lived in magnificent luxury. America has had at its command food and raw material undreamed of in Japan. Indeed you have little idea how small is the margin between plenty and want in the country from which I come or how great has been our sacrifice to the cause of national existence.

I have noticed while I have been here discussions in the magazines and newspaper press of this country on "the vast increasing wealth of Japan." I am inclined to think that these publicists really know but little of the subject with which they deal. In comparison with yours the so-called "wealth of Japan" sinks into insignificance. The food problem with us is not serious but is

solved by frugality. It is true that our people are not in want, because their requirements are limited to the barest necessities of life. We have a very small area of food-producing country from which to draw, and by necessity every bit of it is most intensively cultivated. The food of our people consists mainly of vegetables, rice, roots and barley grown in the valleys and upon the hillsides where irrigation can be made effective, and of the fish that are drawn from the seas which surround us.

I will not venture too far into statistics for that might be dangerous, but I am convinced you would be startled if I should show the cost of living in Japan compared with the present cost of living in America. Even you, with your great store of information, would be astonished if I compared the bulk of our national wealth with the bulk of the national wealth of the United States. A comparison of figures for 1913 shows that this great city of Philadelphia—the ninth in point of importance in the world—has an annual industrial output double the total industrial output of the whole state of Japan. The United States has a population approximating 100,000,000 and Japan has a population approximating 60,000,000. Japan's area is considerably smaller than that of the state of Texas. This alone must open to you a field for consideration of Japan and a ready answer when you are asked why Japan does not contribute more to the war in Europe.

It is only ten years since we engaged in what then was a great struggle for a national existence. The figures representing our national resources and our national debt today are very large indeed compared with the facts of our resources and indebtedness then. In order to protect our nation and our people, to preserve that individuality as a nation which all the allied nations are striving for today, a call for self-denial on the part of our people and for a frugality of which some people have even now little conception is necessary. The burden laid upon our people is still being patiently and patriotically borne. For the last ten years I can safely say that the self-sacrifice and the saving of the great mass of people of Japan has been a splendid tribute to the virtue and value of patriotism, a patriotism so abundantly exhibited in the allied countries today. We were prepared then and we are prepared now to save and to sacrifice in the matter of foodstuffs as in all else, in order to conserve our national forces and unite in preserving for humanity an individual right to freedom and to liberty.

In the year 1868 the total export and import trade of Japan amounted to a little more than \$13,000,000. In 1877 it amounted to \$25,000,000 and in the year 1913, the last normal year of trade, it amounted to about \$600,000,000. I am glad to say, and I think it is a significant fact to relate here to you, that of this total Japan has done more business with the United States than she has with any other country in the world—a condition which is emphasized more in these abnormal times than it was during the normal. Our trade with the United States in 1913 amounted to about 30 per cent of our total foreign trade. I am giving you figures, not as presuming to inform you, but in order that I may emphasize and you may consider the resources of Japan when you estimate the share we should bear in the future of the food distribution.

Permit me to offer you again, and perhaps to bore you with, a further statement which may be illustrative of the resources of our country at a time when we are called upon to contribute men, money and material to the winning of this war. In 1877 the total annual state revenue of Japan was a little under \$30,000,000, and in 1913 the total annual state revenue of Japan was a little under \$300,000,000, not a very large sum in the face of the thousands of millions you can spare.

Additional figures may again help you to understand to what extent we are obliged to impose upon our people a frugality which is borne with a due sense of responsibility by the individual to the state. In the year immediately preceding the great struggle for our national existence, the amount of national debt outstanding was a little more than \$220,000,000. In the year immediately following peace it was a little over \$2,000,000,000. Today our taxes are very heavy indeed; proportionately as heavy, I find, as those imposed recently on the people of this country.

I have finished with figures, and have only injected them to give a comparative idea of resources. A like proportion would apply to the earning capacity of the laboring classes and the margin to spare from their earnings. I assure you that until we realize the enormous difference in the cost of living in Japan and the United States, that comparison with the earnings of your people is staggering.

Now you will certainly agree with me that national economy—which is represented by the frugality of the great mass of the people

and not by lavish expenditure of a few individuals—is as essential to the life of a nation as is economy to the existence or the credit of a firm or individual. Also you will agree with me that the figures representing the business of a nation, firm or individual, during these abnormal times, should not be taken into consideration or into estimation as the normal resources on which such states or individuals may base their present estimates for future years.

The independence of a nation as the independence of an individual is measured by income, expenditure and indebtedness. Our credit has been created by a frugality of living and a sacrifice of the individual to the state in order that the state, the nation and the individual may survive. We are endeavoring to conserve that credit so as to insure our independence. At the same time we are expending, and we are ready to expend funds drawn from a frugal people in a cause which means to us the same as it means to you—a free independent life for the nation and for the individual.

FOOD FOR FRANCE AND ITS PUBLIC CONTROL

BY FRANCOIS MONOD,

“Chef de Cabinet to the French High Commissioner in the United States.

Without attempting to present a complete and authoritative review of the conditions prevailing in France as regards the food question, I think it may be worth while to state here at least some of the main facts or figures evidencing the difficulties with which France has had and is having to contend during the war in order to supply the needs of her civilian population and of her armies.

Emphasizing first the decrease of production and the increase in prices, I will thereafter outline the main measures taken in France in order either to make up for the shortage of agricultural workers or to regulate consumption, to remedy the deficiency of production and to provide a sufficiency of the essential foodstuffs.